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## **JEFFERSON'S MANUAL**

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## JEFFERSON'S MANUAL OF PARLIAMENTARY PRACTICE <sup>1</sup>

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### SEC. I—IMPORTANCE OF ADHERING TO RULES

Mr. Onslow, the ablest among the Speakers of the House of Commons, used to say, “It was a maxim he had often heard when he was a young man, from old

§ 283. Rules as related to the privileges of minorities.

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<sup>1</sup>Jefferson's Manual was prepared by Thomas Jefferson for his own guidance as President of the Senate in the years of his Vice Presidency, from 1797 to 1801. In 1837 the House, by rule that still exists, provided that the provisions of the Manual should “govern the House in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with the Rules and orders of the House.” Rule XXIX, § 1105, *infra*. In 1880 the committee that revised the Rules of the House declared in their report that the Manual, “compiled as it was for the use of the Senate exclusively and made up almost wholly of collations of English parliamentary practice and decisions, it was never especially valuable as an authority in the House of Representatives, even in its early history, and for many years past has been rarely quoted in the House” (V, 6757). This statement, although sanctioned by high authority, is extreme, for in certain parts of the Manual are to be found the foundations of some of the most important portions of the House's practice.

The Manual is regarded by English parliamentarians as the best statement of what the law of Parliament was at the time Jefferson wrote it. Jefferson himself says, in the preface of the work:

§ 284. The Manual as a statement of parliamentary law.

“I could not doubt the necessity of quoting the sources of my information, among which Mr. Hatsel's most valuable book is preeminent; but as he has only treated some general heads, I have been obliged to recur to other authorities in support of a number of common rules of practice, to which his plan did not descend. Sometimes each authority cited supports the whole passage. Sometimes it rests on all taken together. Sometimes the authority goes only to a part of the text, the residue being inferred from known rules and principles. For some of the most familiar

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